



## SolidarMed Guidelines

# Child Protection Guidelines

(CPG)

## 1. Purpose and scope

SolidarMed undertakes all necessary measures to ensure that the rights of children are respected and enforced and that children are protected from abuse.

These regulations specify SolidarMed's processes and the rules for the conduct of individual persons in connection with children. This document defines binding rules for all employed staff members and volunteers working for SolidarMed, both in Switzerland and abroad. Violations of these rules will be sanctioned. This document is therefore an integral part to all SolidarMed employment contracts.

These regulations also call upon SolidarMed's partner organisations to respect the purpose and spirit of this document and to enforce the rights of children.

## 2. SolidarMed key principles

At all times, we behave in a responsible and loyal manner to contribute to the successful implementation of SolidarMed programmes and projects and support the SolidarMed strategies and measures. We regularly reflect on our actions and behaviour and promote compliance with the ethical standards, values and the development approach of SolidarMed.

## 3. Basic principles for Child Protection

These regulations cover four areas:

- a) **Creating an understanding** and awareness for children's rights and threats.
- b) **Preventing** threats to and abuse of children.
- c) **Reporting** violations of children's rights.
- d) **Taking appropriate measures** in suspected cases of child abuse.

This document is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Swiss child protection legislation, the child protection legislation of the countries where we work and international good practice.

## 4. Definition of child abuse

Child Abuse can be defined as an act, or failure to act, on the part of a parent, guardian and / or caregiver that results in the death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation of a child, or which places the child in an imminent risk of serious harm, and / or seriously impacts the child's long-term development and potential (source: Save the Children).

## 5. Rules of conduct for SolidarMed staff<sup>1</sup>

SolidarMed staff must be aware of the risk of child abuse in their activities, recognise situations which entail particular risks, and undertake all necessary measures in their work to protect children from abuse. Projects and activities need to be planned and carried out in such a way as to eliminate or at least minimise the possibility of abuse. In particular, this means:

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<sup>1</sup> "SolidarMed staff" in this document includes SolidarMed employees, volunteers, contracted partners and their staff

## **Sexual or physical assault**

SolidarMed staff are not permitted to enter into any form of sexual contact or other forms of inappropriate physical contact with children, irrespective of the local regulations with regard to the age of consent and/or majority. Sexually suggestive conduct, be it verbal, gestural or otherwise, is forbidden. Also, SolidarMed staff are not permitted to engage in any form of corporal punishment.

## **Exploitation and extortion**

SolidarMed staff are not permitted to perform any kind of child exploitation or extortion. In particular, child labour, demanding or making use of sexual or other illegitimate services in return for goods, assistance or services is strictly forbidden for SolidarMed staff.

## **Emotional abuse and discrimination**

SolidarMed staff are forbidden from discriminating against, disparaging, humiliating, shaming, demeaning or in any other way emotionally abusing children.

## **Contacts with children in closed rooms**

In their work, SolidarMed staff should avoid being in contact with children in closed rooms without at least one further adult being present. If this is not possible, at least one additional staff member is to be given prior notice of this contact, and it should take place in a location which can be easily supervised by other staff members.

## **Child labour**

SolidarMed is committed to the protection of children's rights and strictly prohibits the use of child labor in any form. The organization does not employ children and will not engage with suppliers, contractors, or partner organizations that directly or indirectly benefit from or are complicit in the use of child labor. All business relationships must comply with international standards on child protection, including applicable laws and conventions such as the ILO Minimum Age Convention and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## **Indecent material and mind-altering substances**

The consumption, ownership, production and sharing of child pornography is forbidden for all SolidarMed staff. Personnel are prohibited from bringing children into contact with indecent material(s), whether intentionally or due to negligence. Personnel are prohibited from bringing children into contact with alcohol or other mind-altering substances, whether intentionally or due to negligence.

## **Illustrative material**

Personnel must ensure that the dignity of children is maintained in the production of all film or photographic material and that the consent of the child/adolescent and the caregiver is obtained. In particular, care must be taken to ensure that no images can be used for sexual gratification or other illegitimate use.

## **Information flow**

Personnel are forbidden from hampering in any way the contact of children to persons in whom they wish to confide. Personnel have the duty to report any suspicion of abuse to their superiors.

# **6. Institutional rules**

## **Personnel recruitment**

For the filling of positions with direct or intensive contact with children, the suitability of the candidates is to be reviewed in depth. Specifically, in all cases two references are to be taken up and a suitable character check must take place. Where applicable, staff who work with children, are registered according to the local regulation.

## **Employment contract**

This guideline is an integral part of all SolidarMed employment contracts. The signing of the employment contract is confirmation that these regulations have been read, understood and recognised as binding.

## **Management**

Managers ensure that in their projects and activities, the risk of child abuse is eliminated or at least minimised. This issue is to be given appropriate weight in the management and supervision of personnel.

## **Protection of privacy for children and access rights**

SolidarMed ensures that the disclosure of information about a child is only possible with the informed consent of this child or of his/her caregiver. Personal information of children is to be kept secure; only personnel which need access to this information in order to fulfil their duties should be given access accordingly. If SolidarMed projects are visited by outsiders, direct contact to involved children will only be made possible in the presence of SolidarMed personnel.

## **Reporting incidents and suspected cases**

Managers are to create a working environment which enables children, their caregivers or any staff member to report situations of suspected cases of abuse. Any child/youth/adolescent projects need to have clearly clarified and easily accessible avenues for children/youths to share any complaints or challenges.

SolidarMed ensures that persons who report an incident or suspected case of abuse in good faith are under no circumstances disadvantaged. Persons who knowingly spread baseless suspicions will be sanctioned.

In cases of suspicion of child abuse by a SolidarMed employee, contractor or volunteer this is to be reported immediately. SolidarMed personnel are to report to their own superior. In addition, reports can be placed through the established complaint channels of SolidarMed (via complaint box, anonymous email or Safecall).

## **Handling of complaints or suspected cases**

The management of a complaint follows the established process within SolidarMed. All complaints are taken seriously and are followed up rapidly by the Integrity Committee. Protection of the child has the highest priority, thus the process entails immediate action, depending on the situation.

## **Victim support**

If a child has become a victim of abuse in a SolidarMed project, SolidarMed will support the victim appropriately.

## **Sanctions**

Child abuse is a form of grave misconduct which will in all cases be sanctioned by SolidarMed and will result in the immediate release of the employee, followed by the termination of the employment contract through dismissal. Where indicated, additional legal steps will be initiated. Actual or ostensible misjudgements with regards to the age of the child cannot protect offenders from sanctions. The case management follows the general SolidarMed complaint process, which is led by the SolidarMed Integrity Committee.

# **7. Rules for cooperation with partner organisations**

## **Cooperation**

SolidarMed will only cooperate with organisations which have child protection measures appropriate for the projects and circumstances. Where necessary, SolidarMed will support its partner organisations in the development and implementation of appropriate measures.

## **Review**

SolidarMed regularly reviews whether partner organisations are implementing their child protection measures (e.g. through regular project visits, evaluations, joint steering groups, audits).

**Procedure in cases of non-compliance with child protection measures**

Should SolidarMed determine that personnel of the partner organisation demonstrate behaviour which contradicts the purpose and spirit of this document, then the SolidarMed desk officer and her/his superior will contact the responsible superior locally and will, where necessary, initiate an investigation by an independent, specialised child protection organisation. In cases of repeated abuse or no reaction after a warning or caution, the cooperation will be terminated.

## 8. Scope of application

This Policy applies to all employees worldwide<sup>2</sup> in any contractual relationship with SolidarMed, including interns, volunteers, board members as well as implementing partners and service providers, at all times during their assignment with SolidarMed. This document is an integral part of any employment contract with SolidarMed.

All organizations with whom SolidarMed collaborates and has financial transactions are made aware of our relevant policies and regulations during partnership negotiations. The respective document is the Code of Conduct for Contracted Parties, which is a summary of the key elements of all SolidarMed Integrity Policies.

## 9. Reporting of Misconduct

Any violations of this Policy must be reported through the established reporting channels. Whistleblowers will be protected and must not suffer any retaliation for reporting concerns in good faith.

## 10. Policy management

- Policy approval date: September 2025
- Policy approved by: SolidarMed board
- Policy version: 2.0
- Policy language: English
- Policy review: Every 4 years
- Policy owner (in charge of conducting review, dissemination, training and learning): SolidarMed focal point integrity

<sup>2</sup> In Switzerland, the program countries or any other country